level. The 11C Skill Level 1 test booklet, for example, will contain Tracks 1, 2, and 3. The test will begin with a common task section; then each 11C soldier will be directed to turn to a certain page to find the remaining questions for his track.

Soldiers should carefully study their SQT notices as soon as they arrive, as they will contain the exact list of tasks that will be tested. This is a major change from past years when the SQT notice contained additional tasks that were not tested.

Under this new system, it will be important for each soldier to know in advance which track he will be tested on so he can study for it. Each unit commander, in coordination with the soldier and his first line supervisor, will select the test track the soldier is to follow.

In Fiscal Year 1990, the U.S. Army Training Support Center will further support SQT battle focus by allowing Reserve Component commanders to select the specific tasks that support their units' mission.

The infantry SQT test dates for FY 1990 are 1 March 1990 to 31 May 1990 for Active Army units and 1 March 1990 to 28 February 1991 for Reserve Components units.

Questions or concerns about the new SQT program may be directed to the Commandant, U.S. Army Infantry School, ATTN: ATSH-I-V-TM (Captain Chuber); AUTOVON 835-1670, commercial (404) 545-1670.

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IOBC
Training Infantry Platoon Leaders

MASTER SERGEANT CHARLES G. BEER

When I entered basic training in 1968 I had little or no knowledge of the Army and its military traditions. (I guess I had not watched enough war stories on television when I was growing up.) I wondered about one soldier walking around with a bar on his shirt. He was, I was later told, an officer and, in this case, the company commander.

Then I started thinking: "What type of training did this lieutenant have? Was it the same training I was going through?" Eventually, through my military career, these questions were answered for me, but today's young soldiers may also wonder from time to time about the qualifications of their officers.

First of all, on the basis of my experiences, I can say that our young officers are well-qualified and well-trained to be leaders. And, as a matter of fact, they do go through some of the same training enlisted infantry soldiers go through.

For instance, newly commissioned officers attend a demanding course that trains them to be infantry platoon leaders—the Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC), which is run by the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

HIGH LEVEL OF TRAINING

The Infantry Officer Basic Course assures the Army and the individual infantry soldier that all infantry lieutenants have had the same high level of training. It trains newly commissioned officers to be mentally tough, physically fit, confident, and technically and tactically skilled in infantry tasks.

All infantry lieutenants—Active Army, Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve—take this course. These officers have been commissioned through a variety of institutions and programs including the United States Military Academy, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), Federal or state officer candidate schools (OCSs), and direct commissioning.

My career has given me an insider's view of the training of platoon leaders. I had seven years of experience training cadets before I went to an IOBC training company. While there, I served as the first sergeant for Company A, 2d Battalion, 11th Infantry—one of five IOBC companies.

The company provides the officer-students with the experienced officer and noncommissioned officer leadership they need to make the most of their training. Commanded by a major, each company usually has four or five platoons with 40 to 45 officer-students each. At least two of the NCOs in each

company must be Ranger qualified.

A platoon forms the key learning environment for the officer-students, and has three cadre members:

- A captain, called a senior platoon trainer, runs the platoon. About 90 percent of these captains have just graduated from the Infantry Officer Advanced Course.
- A sergeant first class, the senior trainer, who serves as the platoon sergeant role model, usually has served as a platoon sergeant in a line unit, and usually is also qualified as a drill sergeant.
- A staff sergeant, the assistant platoon trainer, serves as the squad leader role model.

These three cadre members conduct about three-fourths of the instruction, including all Skill Level 1 through 4 infantry tasks.

IOBC lasts approximately 16 weeks, and the bulk of the training is in a field environment. Physical training is held daily at 0530, and classes begin about 0800. The day ends about 1700 or 1730 when the officer-students are not in the field.

EXAMINATIONS

They are evaluated in both tactical and garrison settings through written examinations, hands-on tests, physical fitness tests, compliance with the weight and height standards, and, probably most important, their performance in leadership positions, which exposes them to their future roles as company commanders, executive officers, and platoon leaders. They learn about the duties, responsibilities, and authority of NCOs when they serve as a fire team leader, squad leader, platoon sergeant, and first sergeant.

A key element in infantry leadership is physical fitness. IOBC ensures this fitness by a rigorous physical fitness training program geared to seeing that the officer-students pass the Army *Physical Fitness Test* (APFT) and meet Airborne and Ranger School standards. The officer-students go on numerous road marches with full field packs; they take three APFTs—diagnostic, mid-term, and final; and they are exposed to a wide variety of physical training exercises to help them to become better trainers when they get to their units.

Officer-students must qualify with the M16 rifle, the M203 grenade launcher, the M60 machinegun, and hand grenades. They must be certified on nuclear, biological, and chemical operations; communications; the pistol, the .50 caliber machinegun, the squad automatic weapon (SAW), the light antitank weapon, and the Dragon; vehicle maintenance; call for fire/observed fire; and day and night land navigation.

Written examinations cover indirect fire planning; nuclear, biological, and chemical operations; communications; combined arms tactics; vehicle maintenance; and the battalion training management system.

The officer-students must also perform successfully during a day and night tactical leadership course; a defensive FTX; a light infantry FTX; and a mechanized infantry FTX.

Of all this training, probably the most important is the counseling, formal and informal, that the officer-students receive throughout the course. Informal counseling takes place any time an officer-student will benefit from an evaluation of his specific performance. A platoon trainer conducts formal counseling sessions at three intervals during the course: before the seventh week, during the 12th week, and during the 16th week. The final session focuses on an officer-student's academic efficiency report and his potential as an infantry officer.

The Infantry School considers this counseling essential to officer-student development, because it serves to improve their performance and professionalism. Counseling, by making them aware of their strong and weak points, helps them improve themselves and become more effective combat leaders.

The training in IOBC is all military business. Although discipline is en-

forced, there is no harassment or hazing. And the lieutenants are encouraged to attend Airborne and Ranger Schools after they complete IOBC.

IOBC is one of the most challenging courses the Army has to offer. The young infantry soldier can be sure that today's infantry lieutenant knows his job as a platoon leader. The infantry sergeant, and especially the platoon sergeant, can be sure that they will receive from Fort Benning tactically and technically proficient, physically fit, and hard-charging ıtoon leaders.

Master Sergeant Charles G. Beer recently completed the U.S. Army Sergeant Major Course and is now assigned to the Berlin Brigade. He has completed the Drill Sergeant School, the Advanced NCO Course, Airborne School, and Air Assault School.

Offensive Reconnaissance Planning

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HOWARD W. CRAWFORD, JR.

A major problem for many units training at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) is their weak reconnaissance planning for offensive operations. Fortunately, no special program is needed to improve reconnaissance planning. In fact, a unit only needs to do two things: Use the military decision-making and intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) processes more efficiently, and get its entire staff and all the commanders involved in building a plan. The key, then, is to have a plan before the reconnaissance effort begins. Too often, though, a unit has no such plan.

Successful units at the JRTC, whether they have the time for either deliberate or compressed planning, carefully follow good troop leading procedures when they begin developing plans. Shortcuts rarely work. The key element in any plan is getting the commander's initial planning guidance.

A commander should provide his initial planning guidance for the reconnaissance plan just as he does for the ground tactical plan. Far too often, commanders do not do this, perhaps because they do not view reconnaissance planning as a formal step in the overall planning process. In his initial guidance, therefore, a commander should state his priority intelligence requirements (PIRs). (When he doesn't, his staff must develop recommended PIRs. A good S-2, on the basis of his own preliminary analysis, will normally recommend PIRs for the commander to consider.)

A PIR must address the immediate battle area (or the area of operation) and the area of interest. This analysis should also include the opposing force's air avenues of approach.

TIME LINE

At this point, using a backward planning sequence, the battalion executive officer and S-3 should establish time milestones. A good technique is to produce a time line that reaches all of the elements right after the warning order, but the times must be enforced. The one-third, two-thirds rule is still an important guide.

In preparing for an offensive operation, and before proceeding with the staff estimate process, the staff needs to consider the *offensive* IPB in more detail. When the Army first developed the IPB concept, the emphasis was on defensive operations in support of heavy forces. Later, the focus shifted to include the deployment of strategic contingency forces, and the offensive IPB gained importance. Unfortunately, many of our best doctrinal discussions on the IPB still focus on defensive operations.

In an offensive IPB, the focus is first on those uncertainties concerning possible enemy actions—his withdrawal routes, defenses, disposition of obstacles, counterattack routes, reinforcing options—and then on our own routes forward. The key in an offensive IPB is not to focus on more than can reasonably be achieved at battalion level.

As the entire staff works with the S-2 on input to the IPB, they generate courses of action to support both the ground tactical plan and the reconnaissance plan. This is the critical step; they cannot afford to send out reconnaissance elements too quickly without a proper staff analysis.

Experience at the JRTC has shown that if scouts are sent out without a plan and coordinated support, they rarely contribute to the battle. It is essential that potential named areas of interest (NAIs), targeted areas of interest (TAIs), and decision points be developed to